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AUTHOR Kircaali-Iftar, Gonul; Ozer, Zafer
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ABSTRACT

A Special Education Consultant Training Program (SEC-TP) was offered to 14 special and 8 regular education teachers by the Department of Special Education, Anadolu University, Turkey. Half of the participants were working in a counseling and research center and half were working in various elementary schools in Eskisehir, Turkey. The effects of work-related characteristics of program participants on their success in SEC-TP were analyzed. Teachers working in the counseling and research center were more successful than teachers working in elementary schools. There was an inverse correlation between success in SEC-TP and work experience: the more experienced the teachers were, the less successful they were in SEC-TP. Results have implications for the selection of participants for and the design of similar programs. (Contains 12 references.) (DB)

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FACTORS INFLUENCING SUCCESS IN A SPECIAL EDUCATION CONSULTANT TRAINING PROGRAM IN TURKEY

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Gonul Kircaali-Iftar
Associate Professor

Zafer Ozer
Research Assistant

Department of Special Education
Faculty of Education
Anadolu University
TURKEY

Abstract

A Special Education Consultant Training Program (SEC-TP) was offered to special and regular education teachers by the Deparment of Special Education, Anadolu University, Turkey. The effects of work-related characteristics of the program participants on their success in SEC-TP were analyzed. Teachers working in Counselling and Research Center were found to be more successful than teachers working in elementary schools. There was an inverse correlation between success in SEC-TP and work experience: the more experienced the teachers were, the less successful they were in SEC-TP. Having special education qualification did not have any influence on success in SEC-TP. These findings might help select participants for and/or design contents of future special education consultant training programs in Turkey.

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Mainstreaming is being considered as the most favorable placement alternative for more and more special education students in the 1990's. In order to make mainstreaming successful, special education support services must be provided to the mainstreamed special education students and/or their classroom teachers. Special education consultation is one type of special education support services which is gaining increasing acceptance in the field. A Special Education Consultant Training Program (SEC-TP) was offered to special and regular education teachers by the Deparment of Special Education, Anadolu University, Turkey. The purpose of the present study was to determine the participant factors (work place, special education qualification and work experience) which influenced their success in SEC-TP.

Most commonly provided special education support services are instruction conducted in a resource withdrawal setting, in-class support and special education consultation (Allington and Johnston, 1989; Kircaali-Iftar, 1992; Reisberg and Wolf, 1986; Stein, Leinhardt and Bickel, 1989).

Instruction conducted in a resource withdrawal setting requires the mainstreamed student to be taken out of the regular classroom in some lessons. Furthermore, it is not easy for the classroom teacher and the resource teacher to have coordination about instructing the mainstreamed student. Therefore, instruction conducted in a resource withdrawal setting is considered as a last resort for providing services to mainstreamed students.

In-class support can be provided to the mainstreamed student, to other students in the classroom and/or to the claasroom teacher. Coordination and collaboration skills of the classroom teacher and the support teacher are essential for making in-class support successful.

Special education consultation is an indirect support service delivery model. Special education consultant works with the classroom teacher to help the mainstreamed special education student. Special education consultation has two major purposes: (a) to solve the immediate problems of mainstreamed or at-risk students; (b) to increase teacher knowledge and skills for prevention or resolution of similar problems in the future (Curtis and Meyers, 1988; West and Idol, 1987).

There is no education personnel in schools to provide special education support services in Turkey although mainstreaming is considered as a placment alternative for many special education students in various special education categories nowadays. Special education consultation was shown to be successful in increasing teacher knowledge and skills as well as student achievement in regular classrooms with mainstreamed students in several studies (e.g., Graden, Casey and Bontsrom, 1985; Jones, 1987; Ritter, 1978). Hence, special education consultation was considered to be a promising support service for mainstreamed students in Turkey. Another reason for prefering special education consultation over other support service alternatives was that it was easier to hire itenerant special education consultants rather than fulltime resource teachers or in-class support teachers in Turkish education system.

In order to train special education consultants to work with teachers of mainstreamed special education students, SEC-TP was provided to 22 regular and special education teachers in Turkey. The effects of the work-related characteristics of the program participants on their success in SEC-TP were analyzed. These participant characteristics were (a) work place: Eskisehir Counselling and Research Center or various elementary schools in Eskisehir; (b) having special education qualification; and (c) work experience.

METHOD

Subjects

There were 22 teachers who successfully completed SEC-TP. Half of the teachers were working in Eskisehir Counselling and Research Center and half of them were working in various elementary schools in Eskisehir. Fourteen teachers had special education qualifications whereas 8 teachers did not have any special education qualifications. Average work experience of the teachers was 15 years with a minimum of 1 year, and a maximum of 26 years.

Instruments

The success of the participants of SEC-TP was evaluated with a test which consisted of two sections. In the first section, questions related to concepts and principles of special education consultation took place. In the second section, questions related to applying behavior modification techniques to solve a hypothetical problem were asked. In the second section, teachers were asked to determine a target behavior, develop a record form, record the hypothetical data on the record form, develop behavioral objectives to change the target behavior and suggest a behavior modification program to realize the objective. The highest score of the test was 100.

RESULTS

1. The t-test analysis revealed a significant difference between teachers working in Eskischir Counselling and Research Center and teachers working in elementary schools in terms of success in SEC-TP (Table 1). Teachers working in Eskischir Counselling and Research Center were more successful in SEC-TP than teachers working in schools.

2. The t-test analysis revealed no significant difference between teachers with and without special education qualifications in terms of success in SEC-TP (Table 2).

3. Correlational analysis showed that there was a significant inverse relationship between success in SEC-TP and work experience. The more experienced the teachers were, the less successful they were in SEC-TP ($r = -.52$, $sd = 20$, $p < .02$).

Table 1

Groups	Means	SS	t
Counselling and Research Center	79.36	15.35	3.67*
Schools	58.27	11.31	

*sd=20, p<.01

DISCUSSION

Teachers working in Counselling and Research Center were more successful than teachers working in elementary schools in SEC-TP. This finding reflects the difference between these two work places. Counselling and research centers are special education institutes of Turkish Ministry of Education providing various special education services (e.g. assessment and guidance) to students, teachers and parents. Therefore, content of SEC-TP was somewhat familiar to teachers working in Counselling and Research Center.

There was no difference between teachers with and without special education qualifications in terms of success in SEC-TP. This finding shows that regular and special education teacher training programs do not differ as prerequisites for the present special education counsultant training program.

Table 2

Groups	Means	SS	t
Teachers with special education qualifications	72.79	14.23	1.41
Teachers without special education qualifications	61.88	16.23	

*sd=20, p>.05

An inverse correlation was found between work experience and success in SEC-TP. One explanation for this finding might be teachers' loosing interest and motivation for gaining new knowledge and skills by the time. Another reason might be the changes in course contents of teacher training programs in Turkey. Until 1989, there was only one course related to psychology and special education (which was Educational Psyhology) in teacher training programs. Now three different courses are offered in teacher training programs: Developmental Psychology, Psychology of Learning and Introduction to Special Education (Bayrak, 1993). Hence, recently graduated teachers might have started SEC-TP with a better background.

CONCLUSION

Training special education consultants and providing special education consultation services in schools have started in the last two years in Turkey. The present study showed that work place and work experience influence the success of participants of special education consultant training programs. These findings might help us select participants for and/or desing contents of similar special education consultant training programs in the future.

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